CONFERENCE connection
Alabama · Georgia
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SOUTHEAST CONFERENCE, UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

November 16, 2020

The Season of Gratitude

Grace to you and peace! November has always been the Season of Gratitude for me. We begin on November 1, by expressing gratefulness for the saints who have come before us, providing inspiration as we continue through this life. November is often Stewardship time, when we celebrate the power that is unleashed when individuals who seek to follow the way of Jesus, come together as a community of faith. It is a time of gratitude for the mission and ministries that happen because of our communities of faith. And of course, we are approaching Thanksgiving, a time set aside to lift up gratitude for many things – as individuals, families, and communities.

But things are different this year. From COVID-19, to the loss of employment and income, to the witness of blatant racism and white supremacy on video, to families trying to make safe decisions for their children's education, to the tension of the elections and concern about our democracy - we have experienced and become more aware of many troubling aspects of our lives and our world.

We may not be able to travel to be with family and friends for Thanksgiving; we may not be able to sponsor the regular Thanksgiving meal and gathering for those who are alone at this time of the year; we may be harboring resentment and anger toward all that we have been experiencing; but there is much for which we can be grateful.

For the rest of November, what I call the season of Gratitude, may we take the time each day and lift up things for which we are grateful, even in the

midst of the challenges. And may we live through these days knowing that God's spirit is alive and well: actively present with us every day - providing strength, comfort, and courage for the living of these days. Blessings, Char

News from the Conference Office

From the Generosity Coordinator

Greetings and blessings, 2020 has been a year of transitions, a year of changes, a year of growth, and a year of adjustments. We made it through. We have suffered the loss of jobs loss of loved ones, loss of hope and even our faith has been shaken. We still stand strong and tall in our beliefs that GOD IS!!!

We resisted technology, and now it is our way of life. We resisted change, yet we are changing, we simply refused to adjust, yet we have adjusted. I must say that the one thing that has not changed is our love for, and the generosity given to the Southeast Conference United Church of Christ. Just a note of GRATITUDE for all the ways you continue to support this conference. THANK YOU for your support and your undying faith in this conference and this denomination. WE ARE BECAUSE OF YOU!!! We appreciate your love, your sacrifice and your support during this time of PANDEMIC and everything else that we are encountering as a country, a church, and as a community.

Please watch your mail for your giving statements. We really appreciate you and your support.

2 Corinthians 9:7 teaches: "Each one must give as he has decided in his/her heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for GOD loves a cheerful giver".

Stay safe, continue to show love, one to another and KEEP THE FAITH. GOD IS STILL SPEAKING!!!

Continued blessings, AS YOU JOURNEY...
Carrole

The Conference Minister Search Committee for the Southeast Conference begins!

The Search Committee was commissioned by Ugena Whitlock, Conference Moderator at their first meeting on November 5, 2020. You can view a recording of the Commissioning here. On November 14, the Search Committee had an orientation session on November 14 with Rev. Lee Albertson, UCC Coordinator for Conference Minister Searches. The hope is to have a Conference Minister candidate to present to the Annual Meeting: June 18-19, 2021.

SEC Board Meeting Happenings

by Ugena Whitlock, Moderator

At its November 12 meeting, the SEC Board of Directors — in an abundance of caution given trends in Covid-19 numbers — voted to hold the 2021 SEC Annual Meeting virtually. Mark your calendars now for June 18-19, 2021! Our 55th annual gathering will have the components of our in-person meetings, including worship service, a business meeting, workshops, and guest speakers. The Board will be asking for your feedback on the 2021 Annual Meeting theme. We are planning for the 2022 Annual Meeting to be held in Montgomery, Alabama, at Community Congregational Church.

Also discussed at the Board Meeting was the new SEC Campus Ministry Partnership at the University of Georgia with the Presbyterian Student Center. The partnership is in the process of being finalized, and a joint announcement will be made by mid-January. We are proud to support this exciting new ministry!

The Board will hold its annual retreat virtually on Saturday, January 9, 2021.

SEC Annual Meeting June 18-19, 2021

Want to be part of creating something new? With the decision of the Board of Directors to have a virtual Annual Meeting in 2021, we are seeking individuals who are interested in planning creative opportunities for virtual worship, workshops, and business. If you are interested, please contact Char Burch (cburch@secucc.org).

Clergy Zoom Connections for November

- **An Hour of Conversations and Prayer**
  Tuesdays, November 17, 24 - 11:00 a.m. Eastern (10:00 a.m. Central)
  Zoom: https://zoom.us/j/479440102
- **Live Harp Meditations for Ministers**
  Thursday, November 19 - 12:00 p.m. Eastern (11:00 Central)
  20 minutes of meditation with Celtic harp. Silent prayer and reflection following if desired, facilitated by Rev. Jean Norton. (For questions or to sign up for individual Therapeutic Harp Sessions, contact Jean at HeartSongJean@gmail.com.)
  Zoom: https://zoom.us/j/96976838422
- **Especially for Specialized Ministers**
  Tuesday, December 1, 2020 - 9:30 a.m. Eastern (8:30 a.m. Central)
  Zoom: https://zoom.us/j/354744689
- ***Special:* From Lament to Hope: A Service of Meditation, Prayer, and Music**
  Tuesday, December 1 - 6:00 p.m. Eastern / 5:00 p.m. Central
  As we enter the season of Advent/Christmas, join your colleagues in 30 minutes of quiet meditation and reflection that acknowledges our yearning and stress, while we recognize the hope rooted in our faith.
  REGISTER

Re-Opening of Churches – Conversation for all Church Leaders

Mondays, November 16 and 30, 7 pm Eastern/6 pm Central

As things keep changing regarding COVID-19 and reopening churches, we want to continue the conversation, developing safe and best practices. There is also the question about what churches might maintain into the future. We invite all Moderators, Church Leaders, and Clergy to be part of the conversation. REGISTER

Local Church Bylaw Zoom Meeting Recording

If you missed the November 9th Zoom meeting on Local Church Bylaws with UCC General Counsel Heather Kimmel, you can view the recording and receive the PowerPoint presentation by contacting Heather Fosburgh at hfosburgh@secucc.org. The recording itself will only be available until November 30.

Prayer List

We are continuing the process of praying for authorized ministers, congregations, and ministry groups throughout 2020. We encourage you to include these prayer requests in your local church newsletter, share them with your prayer circle, and include them in your own prayers.

Week of November 15

- Pilgrimage UCC; Marietta, Georgia
- Woody Clark
- Myrtle Johnson
- Heidi Schuler Jones
- Linda White
- Samantha Jo Snellgrove

Week of November 22

- King's Chapel UCC; Alpine, Georgia
- Ashley Cleere
- Robert Johnson
- James Schwarzlose
- Irvin Whitley
- Lawrence R. Wood

Week of November 29

- The United Church; Huntsville, Alabama
- Elizabeth Clement
- Lou Kavar
- Rebecca Seldomridge
- Scott Williamson

- Haley Lerner

Churches in Transition

First Congregational, Savannah GA; Trinity Congregational, Athens AL; Open Table, Mobile AL; Rush Memorial, Atlanta GA; United Church of Cookeville, Cookeville TN; Pleasant Hill Community Church, Pleasant Hill TN; Safe Harbor Family Church, Clinton MS

News from the Wider Church

Virtual Worship with the Council of Conference Ministers

Congregations are invited to the Council of Conference Ministers' second virtual worship service! The service is centered around the Parable of the Talents (which was one of the lectionary reading for Nov. 15). Videos include a full worship service or the Service in parts, along with bulletin. More information and access to the service is at https://ucctcm.org/event/virtual-worship-with-the-council-of-conference-ministers/.

Free Advent Resources from 3 Great Loves

The UCC's 3 Great Loves initiative is providing some Advent graphics and

images for various social media platforms. This includes some thoughtful videos that can be inserted into online worship. It is being distributed through UCC Resources by free download here.

A Very UCC Christmas: 2020

The staff of the national setting is working on a Christmas Pageant and full worship service coming for local churches to use as worship for on or around Dec. 27, or as piece meal.

Each piece will be downloadable as a video file from the national setting, with more details released in marketing before Nov. 20.

In the meantime, as congregations are planning for Advent and Christmas, please know that the following components are coming for your use in worship through Advent and beyond:
10 Digital hymns as music videos:

- O Come, O Come Emmanuel (with John 1: 1-5)
- In the Bleak Midwinter (with Luke 2: 1-5)
- Star of Country Down (with Luke 1: 46-56)
- Away In a Manger /Santo Santo Santo
- O Come All Ye Faithful
- Each Winter as the Year Grows Older - v 1 & 3
- Jesus, Jesus, What a Wonderful Child
- Angels We Have Heard on High
- O Little Town of Bethlehem
- Silent Night
- Go Tell it on the Mountain

A "Lessons and Carols" Pageant service (including some of the above.)

A fully produced UCC Movie: "A Very UCC Christmas: 2020" with four scenes and music tracks as above.

- Scene 1: The Board Room Brainstorming
- Scene 2: Finance Committee Transformations
- Scene 3: Faith Formation Finds Volunteers
- Scene 4: Lessons and Carols

The Lessons and Carols will be streamed on Christmas Eve for all on Facebook and Youtube as Thursdays for the Soul (3:30 p.m. ET/ 2:30 p.m. CT/ 1:30 p.m. MT/ 12:30pm PT/ 11:30 a.m. Alaska, and 10:30 a.m. HI).

The Full Movie "A Very UCC Christmas: 2020" will be streamed on our platforms (YouTube and Facebook) on Dec. 27, 10 a.m. ET.

Trainings and Conferences

Blowing Rock Conference Center Cancels Winter Youth Retreat 2021

submitted by Ted Wilson, BRCC Executive Director

Blowing Rock, N.C. -- It is with concern for everyone's well-being that we have decided to cancel the Blowing Rock Conference Center's Winter Youth Retreat 2021. We were prayerfully hopeful that the COVID pandemic would subside enough for us to continue with the event and we held off on making this decision as long as possible. On a positive note, Alathea has agreed to be our presenter for WYR 2022 and we plan on keeping the theme the same as well. Mark your calendars now for WYR 2022 - January 14 - 17, 2022! We look forward to seeing you then and wish everyone health and happiness.

From the Insurance Board: Securing Your House of Worship: A Roadmap to Success Webcast

Thursday, November 19, 2020 - 2:00 p.m. EST

The Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) is committed to helping houses of worship navigate security concerns such as civil unrest, active intruder, cybersecurity, and so much more. Protective Security Advisors, Christine Figueroa and Patrick Shaw, from CISA will discuss how churches can utilize their new security assessment tool designed for houses of worship, and provide an overview of how to access critical safety resources.

View A Brief Introductory Video
Click Here To Register

Conference Calendar

Clergy Conversations via Zoom
November 3 @ 11:00 am - 12:00 pm EST

Responding to the Election
November 5 @ 4:00 pm - 5:30 pm EST

Healthy Boundaries 101
November 7 @ 8:45 am - 12:15 pm EST

Discussion about Church Bylaws
November 9 @ 7:00 pm - 8:30 pm EST

Clergy Conversations via Zoom
November 10 @ 11:00 am - 12:00 pm EST

Re-Opening of Churches – Conversation for all Church Leaders
November 16 @ 7:00 pm - 8:30 pm EST

Clergy Conversations via Zoom
November 17 @ 11:00 am - 12:00 pm EST

View the **full calendar** of events online: https://www.secucc.org/events/

Contact Us

Conference Minister: **Rev. Char Burch;** cburch@secucc.org

Assoc. Conf. Minister: **Rev. Heather Fosburgh;** hfosburgh@secucc.org

Generosity Coordinator: **Min. Carrole Moss;** cmoss@secucc.org

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